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WISCONSIN WOMEN FIGHT FOR SUFFRAGE

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The State Historical Society of Wisconsin

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JAMES I. CLARK

"SHAME ON THE WOMAN!" shouted one, stamping his feet. "She's bringing in woman's rights," yelped another. "She shan't speak!" cried a third. The 1853 meeting of world temperance workers was in an uproar as the Reverend Antoinette Brown made her way to the speakers' platform to talk about religion and temperance. She made the platform, but she didn't get a chance to speak. The din and shouting lasted for two hours, then everyone quit for the day.

Horace Greeley reported the action in his New York *Tribune*:[1]

> This convention has completed three of its four business sessions and the results may be summed up as follows:
>
> First Day—Crowding a woman off the platform.
>
> Second Day—Gagging her.
>
> Third Day—Voting that she stay gagged.
>
> Having thus disposed of the main question, we presume the incidentals will be finished this morning.

That was that. Or was it?

This woman's rights business was becoming a little annoying to the men who ran the affairs of the world. Women had mixed in the abolition movement. Many agitated for the right to hold property in their own names. Several had become ministers. Elizabeth Blackwell had talked herself into a medical school and became the first lady physician in the United States. Amelia Bloomer was running around in short skirts and pantaloons, arguing for greater freedom in dress. Pretty soon they would even get the idea that they were equal enough to vote! They did, too.

Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton got together in 1851, and the opening guns for woman suffrage were soon primed and ready to fire. Wrote Mrs. Stanton:

> Night after night by an old-fashioned fireplace we plotted and planned the coming agitation, how, when, and where each entering wedge could be driven, by which woman might be recognized and her rights secured.

Suffrage societies were formed in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

The movement soon leaped the Alleghenies and societies organized in Ohio and Indiana. By the 1850s suffragists were hammering on legislative doors in Ohio, demanding a constitutional amendment giving women the vote. They didn't get it, but that was only the first of many such attempts.[2]

In Wisconsin

In the 1846 Wisconsin constitutional convention delegates had toyed with the twin ideas of woman and Negro suffrage. Nothing came of either. There was also pressure to adopt an article giving women equal property holding rights. Some delegates opposed that

> because it was contrary to the usages and customs of society, to the express commands of the Bible that "the twain shall be one flesh"; because it would encourage men to be fraudulent by secreting their property under the cover of the wife's name, and because the provision if adopted will lead the wife to become a speculator, and to engage in all the turmoil and bustle of life, liable to sue and be sued, and thereby destroy her character of a wife; and because villains would be induced to seek wives not for their sake, but for the covering up their frauds.

The article was not adopted. It took ten years of agitation, petitioning and lobbying for Wisconsin women to get the right to hold property in their own names.[3]

It took longer than that to get the right to vote.

Beginnings were very slow. Lucy Stone, ardent woman's rights worker, came to the state in 1855 and spoke in Milwaukee, Madison and elsewhere. She urged the abolition of slavery and a constitutional amendment giving women the vote. Abolishing slavery got a lot of Wisconsin support. Equal suffrage on the other hand, got very little.

Thanks to jobs women did during the Civil War, many thought equal rights would soon be gained. The war opened the doors of several trades and occupations to women. In Wisconsin so many printers left for the army that women found entry into that trade relatively easy—although stay-at-home men objected violently and threatened to strike. During and after the war store clerking became acceptable woman's work. The number of Wisconsin women employed outside the home went up from 17,500 in 1861 to 25,000 in 1870. By then increasing numbers of women were found in paper mills, cheese factories, book binderies, and match and glove factories. They also were peddlers, steamboat employees, bookkeepers, trunk and cigar makers, dealers in books, stationery, drugs, awnings and bags.

All that effort helped the Union win the war, but it brought equal rights no closer. "This is the Negro's hour," said the men, and shied from linking woman suffrage to that of the freedmen.[4]

Difficult Times

Women kept right on working for the vote, however. Wisconsin suffragists organized a convention at Janesville in 1867. They also tried to get a constitutional amendment passed. Such changes had to be approved by two legislatures before being submitted to the voters for

Lucius Fairchild, governor 1866–72

ratification. A resolution for an amendment got through in 1867, but the next legislature turned it down.

Amending state constitutions to allow woman suffrage was a difficult task. Kansas suffragists got an amendment through that legislature and worked from spring to November in 1869 to persuade voters to approve it. The task was hard, wrote one, and suffragists experienced

> every physical hardship, traveling night and day in carriages, open wagons, over miles and miles of the unfrequented prairies, climbing divides, and through deep ravines, speaking in depots, unfinished barns, mills, churches, schoolhouses, and the open air, on the very borders of civilization, wherever two or three dozen voters could be assembled.

Women probably got an education on propaganda methods and political campaigning in Kansas that year. That was about all they got.

Wisconsin suffragists didn't give up the amendment idea. They held a convention in Milwaukee in February 1869, under the leadership of Dr. Laura Ross and Miss Lila Peckham, a lawyer. National workers Susan B. Anthony, Mary A. Livermore, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were there. Those women went on to Madison and addressed an evening session of the legislature, presided over by Governor Lucius Fairchild.

The Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association was born about this time. Local chapters formed in Fond du Lac, Richland Center, Baraboo, Evansville, Boscobel and Union Grove. The WWSA swung into action with speeches, recruiting drives and suffrage literature.[5]

Yet until the 20th century was underway the Wisconsin movement progressed very slowly and indeed, at times seemed to stand quite still. Attempts to get the constitution amended were unsuccessful. Organizational funds were usually low, most women were indifferent, and the majority of men firm in opposition. The Racine *Journal* pointed out in 1882 that "So far the agitators have made little progress in convincing their own sex. The great majority of women seem to be content with exclusion from the responsibilities of government and manifest no absorbing ambition to fill the offices." A lady immigrant to Racine in the 1870s wrote that she had heard a lot about radicalism west of the Alleghenies,

> But I confess I never before found myself in the midst of such a con-

servative society. To affirm one's faith in woman suffrage is about as much as one's social position is worth, and for a woman actually to declare that she desires to go to the polls and vote, produces an effect not unlike that which might be produced should she express a desire to commit burglary or arson.[6]

To every female argument for suffrage, most men had one or another pat answer. Wisconsin men agreed with those in other states that woman was the "weaker vessel" to be protected and cared for, but not allowed to assert herself on matters that only men could handle. "Let woman look where she will," the editor of the Racine *Journal* had written in 1869:

> from cellar to garret, in the streets and on the waters, she sees nothing but the invention and work of man. She cannot get her eyes off from his work; it meets her gaze everywhere, in the houses and in the streets. . . . There is no use in trying to enumerate, for everything worth mentioning, that has been done since God finished His labors on the sixth day, has been done by man.

That was not exclusively a male attitude. Many women, perhaps most in the earlier days, felt there was something improper about women trying to get into affairs that had traditionally been male only. "In politics I do not think that women have any place," wrote one skeptical female. "The life is too public, too wearing, and too unfitted to the nature of women. It is bad enough for men—so bad, that some of the best of them keep out of it; and it would be worse for women."[7]

Other States, and the National Picture

Wisconsin's neighbor states did somewhat better. The Iowa Suffrage Association was formed in 1870, and had 250 active clubs by 1900; Wisconsin had fewer than 100 members over the entire state. The Illinois group by 1900 had over a hundred counties at least partially organized; Wisconsin had only 18 to 20 counties organized on a permanent basis. In Michigan the organization was weaker than in Iowa and Illinois, but still stronger than the one in Wisconsin. Only Minnesota experienced a lack of success similar to that of Wisconsin.

The national suffrage organization was rather weak at this time. Most of the few thousand women members were from wealthier backgrounds. Those women had time and money to devote to out-of-home activity. The movement never attracted women who could take little time from caring for home and children to carry on outside activity. The women who were in the vast majority among those supposed to benefit from equal suffrage had no time, or were disinclined to work for the change. Possibly too, some might have got the idea that suffragettes didn't believe in the worth and dignity of home-making. That might have caused many sincere women to doubt the value of supporting such a movement.[8]

The presence of a large number of conservative foreign born in both Minnesota and Wisconsin probably contributed to the slow progress in those states. Foreign immigrants had strong ideas on the place of women,

and that place was not in the public eye, nor at the ballot box. As a "German Democrat" wrote in the Milwaukee *Sentinel* in 1869:

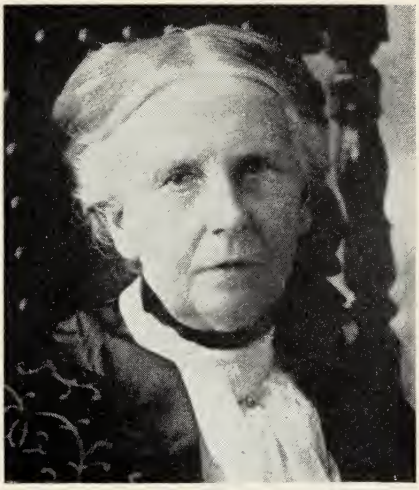
> The holy, loving influence of the wife and mother, her making the house, the family, the earthly paradise of man, are the only powerful moral and social reformers, and that dignity is the highest on earth, and high over the ballot box.

The Wisconsin School Law

Even with all the obstacles, Wisconsin women won a small victory in 1885. A school suffrage law got past the legislature. Only one legislative passage was necessary to add a new class of voters, although the law had to be approved by voters in the next general election. In 1886 a majority of over 4,500 favored allowing women to vote in school elections. Suffragettes rejoiced. It could be the opening wedge to ever wider powers of franchise.

It was to be a hollow victory. First test of the law came in 1887. Olympia Brown, then president of the Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association, went to court for $5,000 damages when her vote was refused in a Racine municipal election.

The Rev. Olympia Brown was a veteran suffragette. She was born on a pioneer Michigan farm in 1835, and at age 15 taught a country school. Later, unable to enter the non-co-educational University of Michigan, she went to Mount Holyoke Female Academy in Massachusetts. Later she attended Antioch College and there entered the woman's rights controversy. She stayed with it until the end.



The Rev. Olympia Brown

She met with intense hostility and opposition, but Miss Brown obtained admittance to a New York theological school during the Civil War. She became the second American woman to become a minister in a regularly constituted church, when in 1863 she was ordained in the Universalist denomination. Fifteen years later the Rev. Brown came to Racine with her husband John Henry Willis and filled a pulpit there.

Believing that municipal elections were closely connected with school affairs, Miss Brown tried to cast her ballot at Racine in 1887. Election officials refused it, arguing that the law gave women the right to vote only in elections directly pertaining to school matters. Circuit Judge John B. Winslow of Racine County agreed with Miss Brown, however, and suffragists for the moment had won an important victory.

Next year the state supreme court decided otherwise. All government officials from the governor on down, said the court, could be considered

as connected in some way with school affairs. It was not the legislature's intent to grant women such broad powers of franchise. Legislators had passed the school bill after rejecting both a bill to grant total woman suffrage and one which granted municipal suffrage. Therefore the intent was clear: women could vote only in school elections.

A later decision on a similar case ruled separate ballot boxes necessary for women voters. Not until 1901 did the legislature get around to the amending the law to provide for those special boxes. Meantime, school suffrage was a dead letter.[9]

A New Slant on Suffrage

The discouraging results of attempted constitutional amendments and the disappointing outcome of the school law did little to make women enthusiastic about supporting the suffrage movement in Wisconsin. After nearly half a century of labor the goal seemed as far away as it had in the beginning.

With the opening of the 20th century a few new ideas took hold. All over the country people were learning of the need for reform in many aspects of American life. In Wisconsin the Progressive movement, led by Robert M. La Follette, was gaining momentum. New ideas were being heard on the structure and function of society and its institutions, and those ideas were attracting attention and support.

In the Wisconsin suffrage movement, as elsewhere, a different group of women was taking over. Those women were willing and able to broaden the suffrage argument. They gave it a sociological as well as a legal basis, and argued for its necessity in the light of social change resulting from the growth of an industrial society.

According to these women, there may have been a time when woman's place was in the home, but the home was no longer what it had been.

Fifty years ago (they said in the early 1900s), the mother was directly responsible for and had control over home affairs. The home was the center of education, recreation, moral training, and the manufacture of foods and clothing. There was little if any outside competition. Now all that had changed. Food and clothing came to the home from a factory. Children were spending more years in school. and going farther from the home for recreation.

Such being the case, women needed some way in which they could retain at least indirect control over influences that affected the home, be they industrial, educational, or recreational. They must be able to do something about impure food, must somehow supervise their children's recreation, and must have a voice in their education. The only means by which they could regain even that partial control—through the ballot—was denied them. Jane Addams, famous and popular director of Chicago's Hull House, asserted that

> if woman would fulfil her traditional responsibility to her own children; if she would educate and protect from danger factory children who must find their recreation on the street; if she would bring the cultural forces to bear upon our materialistic civilization; and if she would do it all with the dignity and directness fitting one

Theodora Youmans

who carries on her immemorial duties, then she must bring herself to the use of the ballot—that latest implement for self-government. May we not fairly say that American women need this implement in order to preserve the home?

Even without woman suffrage, progressive legislation was being passed on both state and national levels prior to World War I, with Wisconsin leading the way in many instances. Wage and hour and workmen's compensation laws were passed, pure food bills enacted, and trusts and railroads came under some regulation. Still, there was much to be done and suffragettes felt that women could better influence enactment of social legislation if they had more direct power over legislators by means of the ballot.

New suffrage leaders in Wisconsin were such women as Belle Case La Follette, and later her daughter Fola; Ada James of Richland Center, daughter of State Senator David G. James; Mrs. Victor Berger, wife of the well-known Milwaukee Socialist leader; and Theodora Youmans, wife of the editor of the Waukesha *Freeman,* and an able editor in her own right.

These women were willing to use every weapon of persuasion to achieve their goal. They would speak, petition, march in parades, lobby in legislatures and in Congress, write articles, do everything possible to get their point across.

Older women didn't welcome this change to a more militant type of campaign. Those women had worked quietly in small groups and clubs, and based their suffrage arguments on legal, natural rights grounds. They found marching in a parade, waving banners and singing songs somewhat distasteful. More than anything else, perhaps, the older women were reluctant to yield place to a younger group after so many hard years had been put in and when suffrage had not yet been won.

Disagreements over procedure led to a split in the WWSA and the formation in 1911 of the Political Equality League. Ada James became its president. The WWSA remained active and both groups worked to obtain suffrage.

Perhaps the split hurt the cause. Many thought it strange that there should be two organizations working when one could have done the job as well and would have continued to present a solid front before reluctant and recalcitrant males.[10]

A group of suffragettes, about 1910

An Amendment Bill

A real test of organizational strength came in 1912. That year, in Wisconsin, Arizona, Oregon, Kansas and Michigan referenda were held on constitutional amendments.

The Wisconsin battle began the year before, when a referendum bill was presented in the legislature. Suffragists left no lobbying by-way unexplored. They made speeches, button-holed legislators, and rounded up the vote. One female lobbyist even called on St. Valentine for aid. She sent a large poster of yellow paper with red hearts and arrows to each state legislator:

> February 12, 1911. Greetings from the women of Wisconsin, the most progressive state in the Union.
>
> To remind you that you must let the women vote. Because:
>
> 1. The most progressive and intelligent men and women demand it.
> 2. Taxation without representation is unjust.
> 3. This is (or should be) a government of the people, for the people, and by the people—women are people.
> 4. The influence of women is needed to secure clean morals and clean politics.

The valentine ended with "8. The Women of Wisconsin do want to vote."[11]

Most legislators were willing to pass the bill, but there was one highly vocal holdout: Assemblyman Dorner of Milwaukee. Amid hisses and cat-calls he insisted that women belonged in the home, that they were inferior to men, and that women didn't want to vote anyway. "The

Suffragettes on tour. Ada James standing in center

Brave Mr. Dorner," editorialized the pro-suffrage *Wisconsin State Journal:*

> Our first thought was that Dorner should be recommended for the Nobel peace prize, but on second thought we are in doubt about this attitude toward woman suffrage being calculated to keep the peace. A Carnegie hero medal is more nearly his size. Really that was a courageous thing to do to get up and talk back at five hundred women. That Dorner was illogical, unreasonable, absurd, in no way detracts from the real heroism of his effort. . . . If Dorner had had some sound footing; if he had been able to adduce a single argument against the flood of logic and appeal his effort would not have called for such superb nerve.[12]

In spite of Dorner's fight the referendum bill passed with comfortable majorities. In the spring of 1911 suffragettes set out to convince the voters they should approve the change. The general election was more than a year away, but there was much to be done.

The Campaign

One of the first attention-getting stunts was an automobile tour in August of 1911. Members of the Political Equality League started from Milwaukee and covered eight of the southern counties. The women considered it a success from the standpoint of the attention it gained if nothing else. To many people, the sight of a woman speaking from the back seat of a car parked on a street corner was, to say the least, startling.

The PEL organized support at the county and Assembly district level. Belle Case La Follette made use of her husband's extensive mailing lists, and postmen lugged hundreds of pounds of pamphlets and propa-

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An address by Belle Case LaFollette

ganda leaflets all over the state—printed arguments urging that Wisconsin adopt universal suffrage.

Every conceivable meeting and convention, state and county fair, farmers' institute, grange meeting, civic and religious gathering, and labor union get together was fair ground for propaganda in languages foreign and domestic. Rest tents for women and children were erected at county and state fairs, and while they served refreshments and tended babies, suffragettes distributed information about their cause. At the 1912 State Fair leaflets were scattered from an airship. The well-known race horse Dan Patch paraded around the grounds carrying the banner, WISCONSIN WILL ADOPT WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN 1912.

Suffragettes pressured theatre managers to allow speeches between acts or while the reels were being changed at the movies. A commercial film called "Votes for Women" and featuring Jane Addams was shown in many Wisconsin theatres.

At every opportunity women marched in parades, plugging suffrage with banners such as,

The Political Equality League's "Mary E"

Mother mends my socks and shirts,
Mother mends my coat;
Mebbe she could mend some laws,
If she had the vote.

Two Milwaukee workers toured farms and small towns selling washing machines. At the same time they plugged suffrage. They sold the machines for a little more than cost and put the profits into the PEL treasury.

The WWSA launch "Juanita" swung around Lake Winnebago and went down the Fox to Neenah and Menasha and up the river to Omro and Berlin. The PEL marine division sent the "Mary E." up the Wolf to Winneconne, Fremont, and points farther north.

Financial and speaking aid came from national suffrage headquarters, from Ohio, Illinois and Chicago chapters, and even from abroad. In November 1911, the celebrated British suffragette Emeline Pankhurst, took time off from similar labors in England to speak to over 4,000 people at Milwaukee.

In all, over $13,000 was spent on the campaign. Things had gone well. People were interested, speeches well received, the workers enthusiastic. Wisconsin appeared to be suffrage-minded. It looked like a shoo-in.[13]

Anti-Suffrage Groups

There was some strong opposition however. Early in December 1911, active and stubborn resistance to woman's suffrage was promised by the leaders of the 38,000 member German-American Alliance. "Just what form the campaign will take has not been decided," said Professor Leo Stern, assistant superintendent of Milwaukee Schools and president

of the Alliance. Interestingly enough, although strong in his condemnation of votes for women, Stern passed the buck: "The position taken by the alliance was inspired by women members. . . . They are opposed to equal suffrage as unnecessary and as a cloak to prohibition and the curtailment of personal privilege."

In August the following year President Stern spoke again. "It is the duty of every delegate present here," he told the convened Alliance in Milwaukee, "to vote for or against woman's suffrage when the question arises in the fall. I do not mean to dictate which way you shall vote. Personally, I shall vote against it." Delegates supported him with a round of applause.

German opposition to equal suffrage in Wisconsin had been consistent and persistent. Like many other national groups in the state Germans had little use for ideas on female equality. Connected to that conservatism was a real fear that woman suffrage was just one step away from prohibition, a state of affairs exceedingly bad for business and for the enjoyment of life.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union had been founded in 1874 by Frances Willard. It had chapters in every state and each organization had its committee on suffrage. Those groups advocated and campaigned for equal rights. The connection between suffrage and prohibition was too close for the comfort of those who depended on liquor and beer manufacturing and sales for a living.

Brewers, distillers, and liquor dealers, regardless of their national backgrounds, were solid against woman suffrage. They could count on support from the farmer who sold his grain and on the saloonkeeper who sold the finished product. How real their fears were was later demonstrated with the passage of the 18th amendment. Interestingly enough, however, it passed and was ratified without universal suffrage.[14]

Wisconsin Voters Decide

As election day 1912 drew near, ads urging a "yes" vote appeared in many Wisconsin newspapers. Placards in streetcars and interurbans reminded people to vote, and vote the right way. Suffragette poll watchers were appointed. Women armed themselves with literature and arguments, to take places as near to voting booths as the law allowed to make last-minute appeals. The *Wisconsin State Journal* in Madison devoted four pages to pro-suffrage arguments on November 1, featuring articles by Professor John R. Commons, University President Charles Van Hise, Chief Justice John B. Winslow of the Wisconsin Supreme Court and others. The best of people favored it, but even the best of people had but one vote apiece.

"Wisconsin's motto is 'Forward,'" said the Milwaukee *Evening Wisconsin* on November 2. "It will be interesting to see whether the men of Wisconsin, voting on the question of woman suffrage next Tuesday, show a disposition to live up to the motto of the state."

One hundred thirty-five thousand of them did. Over two hundred thousand did not. "Woman suffrage in Wisconsin went down in unques-

On the stump
for woman suffrage

DANGER!

Woman's Suffrage Would Double the Irresponsible Vote

It is a MENACE to the Home, Men's Employment and to All Business

(SAMPLE)

Official Referendum Ballot

If you desire to vote for any question, make a cross (X) or other mark in the square after the word "yes," underneath such question; if you desire to vote against any question, make a cross or other mark in the square after the word "no" underneath such question.

Shall Chapter 227 of the laws of 1911 entitled 'an act extending the right of suffrage to women' be adopted?

Yes ☐ No ☒

The above is an exact reproduction of the separate ballot printed on **pink** paper which will be handed to you in your voting place on November 5. Be sure and put your cross (X) in the square after the word "no" as shown here, and—**be sure and vote this pink ballot.**

Issued and Circulated by

PROGRESS PUBLISHING CO

WATERTOWN, WIS.

An anti-woman suffrage advertisement, 1912

tioned defeat at the hands of the voters of the state Tuesday," said the Milwaukee *Sentinel* the next day. "An emphatic 'no' to the demands of the Political Equality League and various kindred organizations throughout the state was recorded at the polls."

Voters in Arizona, Oregon, Michigan and Kansas felt differently. The amendment passed in those states.

Various reasons were assigned the defeat in Wisconsin. Some said the friendliness of the Wisconsin Scandinavians had been over-estimated. Many thought Progressive Republicans didn't follow La Follette's lead in supporting the amendment. The liquor industry and Germans were also blamed.

Although all of those were contributing factors, probably the real reason was the conservatism of male voters regardless of party or national background. There were real objections to setting up a new, unpredictable class of voters that would demand attention at every election. Many professional men saw suffrage as an opening wedge to female competition for their jobs. Many women probably resented what they considered suffragette slurs on the dignity of housework and bringing up children, and influenced their husbands against approval.

Above all, as one writer pointed out, what defeated woman suffrage for so long

> has been this unreasoning, deep-seated feeling, a sense of revulsion at the thought of woman in politics, out of her "natural sphere," . . . . The women do not have to fight the corrupt politician; they do not have to fight the vicious interests and never did. It has always been the honest, wholesome, straightforward, upright high-mindedness of good men that they have had to fight.[15]

After 1912

Suffragettes kept working. They tried for another referendum, but failed. They published literature on political and social forces that affected women. They furnished material for women's club discussion of government, labor and industrial problems, and social reform. A suffrage school was organized at Madison in 1914 and many prominent men and women gave lectures.

Victories—some partial, some complete—were won in other states. Wyoming had come into the Union in 1890 with universal suffrage in its constitution. Colorado, Utah and Idaho adopted it by amendment in the 1890s. During the early 20th century years Washington, California and Nevada amended their constitutions and gave women the vote.

The suffrage question was overshadowed by the outbreak of World War I, although agitation didn't cease. Some groups adopted British suffragette tactics, and picketted the White House and marched in patriotic parades. Nearly 100 Wisconsin women marched in uniform yellow tunics and hats at Chicago during the Republican National Convention in 1916, joining women from other states in propagandizing for a pro-suffrage plank in the party platform. A short time later the Democrats in convention at St. Louis endorsed the principle of equal suffrage. Things were looking up. Much suffragette

effort now turned to securing a federal constitutional amendment.

Then the United States entered the war and, as in the Civil War, women proved their usefulness in factories, on the farms and in various forms of home front activity. Patriotic meetings were held, Americanization Committees of suffrage organizations were appointed to teach aliens American history, government, and English, and many Victory gardens were raised and much food conserved. Eastern suffragists gathered $125,000 to equip an overseas hospital and Wisconsin's quota of $1,500 was far exceeded.[16]

Final Victory

Complete victory for woman suffrage came after the Republican landslide in 1918.

During the war years several states changed their constitutions to allow women to vote in primary elections, for presidential electors, in municipal elections, or granted partial suffrage of another sort. Others granted complete freedom to vote. One of the biggest state victories came in New York. Late in 1917, after a tremendous campaign, women won a constitutional amendment in that state.

Next step was the 66th Congress. Early in the 1919 session a federal amendment was presented and, after much lobbying and hard work by suffragettes, was passed.[17]

Several states scrambled to be first to ratify. The governors of Kansas and Iowa wanted a special legislative session to handle the matter. Legislatures in Wisconsin, Illinois, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania were still in regular session in the spring of 1919. The race narrowed to Wisconsin and Illinois, with the latter having a slight edge in actual voting on the measure.

Afternoon newspaper readers on June 10, 1919 saw:

WIS. RATIFIES SUFFRAGE

Only 3 Votes Oppose Move

Badger Legislature Trails Illinois Solons in Vote; Otto and Donnelly Delay Ballot by Floor Tactics

The Wisconsin legislature today ratified the national constitutional woman suffrage amendment. The vote in the Assembly was 54 to 2; that in the Senate, 23 to 1.

Wisconsin women suffrage leaders conferred anxiously this morning with members of both houses friendly to their cause, in the effort to make Wisconsin the first state to ratify. The final vote in the Assembly was taken just as the report reached the house from the State Journal office that the Illinois Assembly and Senate had ratified.

Assistant Secretary of State W. J. Naylor is confident that Wisconsin's certification will be the first to reach Washington, as every technical detail as to papers to be mailed was arranged in advance.

But they weren't mailed. Former Senator David G. James was appointed special messenger to take the certification to the nation's capital. He deposited the papers in the Secretary of State's office minutes before the Illinois messenger arrived. Although a neighbor state had voted

to ratify first, Wisconsin became the first to file the papers.[18]

Other states soon followed.

The 36th state was in doubt for some time. Finally, after much wrangling and mind-changing, Tennessee got the honor. In the summer of 1920 the 19th Amendment became law.[19]

Women's right to vote was now secure. The long years of hard work had paid off at last. Wisconsin women had contributed to the campaign even though they had been unsuccessful in swinging Wisconsin to universal suffrage before the federal amendment.

In 1921 Wisconsin went a step further, and wrote into law several other rights for women. Now they could vote, were free to engage in contracts, could choose their place of residence for voting, serve on juries, hold public office, hold and convey property, and could obtain the care and custody of children.[20] Wisconsin had now gone all the way for woman's rights.

NOTES

[1] Susan B. Anthony, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage* (6 vols. New York, 1881–1922), 1:152–63.

[2] *Ibid.,* 1:459, 101–170; Abbie Graham, *Ladies in Revolt* (New York, 1934) 11–76.

[3] Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The Convention of 1846* (Madison, 1919), 631. Fred L. Holmes, *Wisconsin–Stability, Progress, Beauty* (5 vols., Chicago, 1946), 2:258–59.

[4] Lawrence L. Graves, The Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Movement. 1846–1920. Unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1954, 1–14; Holmes, *Wisconsin,* 2:260.

[5] Graves, Woman Suffrage Movement, 15–51; *History of Woman Suffrage,* 2:229–68.

[6] *Woman's Journal,* August 16, 1873.

[7] Jeanette L. Gilder, *Why I Am Opposed to Woman Suffrage,* (n.d n.p.)

[8] Graves, Woman Suffrage Movement, 78–105, 353–54, 360–68.

[9] On school law, *Ibid.,* 65–77.

[10] On new emphases, *Ibid.,* 338–43; Jane Addams, *Why Women Should Vote* (n.d.), 19–20.

[11] *Wisconsin Citizen,* March, 1911.

[12] *Ibid.,* April, May, 1911, quote from May issue.

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[16] National American Woman Suffrage Association, *Victory—How Women Won It* (New York, 1940), 161–62; Graves, Woman Suffrage Movement 275–313.

[17] Carrie Champman Catt and Nettie R. Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics* (New York, 1926), 280–414.

[18] Madison *Wisconsin State Journal,* June 10, 1919; Graves, Woman Suffrage Movement, 308–309.

[19] Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics,* 455.

[20] *Laws of Wisconsin,* 1921, Chapter 529.

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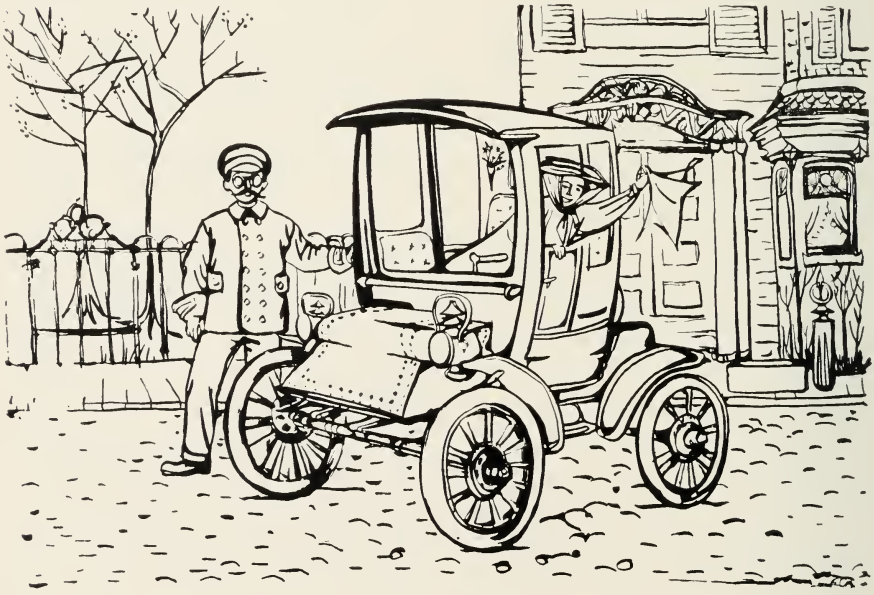

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